Nº 93. SATURDAY, *November* 11, 1786.

Fortunatus et ille Deos qui novit agrestes.

VIRG.

ONE of the great pleasures of a periodical Essayist arises from that sort of friendly and cordial intercourse which his publication sometimes procures him with worthy and respectable characters. The receipt of the following letter has added to the list of my acquaintance a gentleman whose person indeed I am ignorant of, but whose sentiments I respect, whose sorrows I revere, and whose feelings I am persuaded many of my readers (even in these days, which he holds not very susceptible of such emotions) will warmly participate.

To the AUTHOR of the LOUNGER.

SIR,

I, As well as your correspondent *Urbanus*, was very much pleased with your late Paper on the moral use of the country, and the portrait of the excellent Lady it contained. I am an old man, Sir, but, thank God, with all my faculties and feelings entire and alive about me; and your description recalled to my memory some

 worthy

worthy characters with which my youth was acquainted, and which, I am inclined to believe, I should find it a little difficult, were I even disposed to look out for them, to supply now. At my time of life, friends are a treasure which the fortunate may have preserved, but the most fortunate can hardly acquire; and, if I am not mistaken in my opinion of the present race, there are not many friendships among them which I would be solicitous to acquire, or they will be likely to preserve. It is not of their little irregularities or imprudences I complain; I know these must always be expected and pardoned in the young; and there are few of us old people who can recollect our youthful days without having some things of that sort to blush for. No, Mr. Lounger, it is their prudence, their wisdom, their foresight, their policy, I find fault with. They put on the livery of the world so early, and have so few of the weaknesses of feeling or of fancy! To this cause I impute the want of that rural sentiment which your correspondent Urbanus seems to suppose is banished only from the country-retreats of town-dissipation, from the abodes of fashionable and frivolous people, who carry all the follies and pleasures of a city into scenes destined for rural simplicity and rural enjoyments. But in truth, Sir, the people of the country themselves, who never knew fashionable life or city-dissipation,

 have

have now exchanged the simple-hearted pleasures which in my younger days were common amongst them, for ideas of a much more selfish and interested sort. Most of my young acquaintance there (and I spend at least eight months of the year in the country) are really arrived at that prudent way of estimating things which we used to be diverted with in *Hudibras*:

"For what's the value of a thing,
"But as much money as 'twill bring?"

Their ambition, their love, their friendship, all have this tendency; and their no-ambition, their no-love, their no-friendship, or, in one word, their indifference about every object from which some worldly advantage is not to be drawn, is equally observable on the other hand.

On such a disposition, Mr. Lounger, what impression is to be made by rural objects or rural scenery? The visions which these paint to fancy, or the tender ties they have on remembrance, cannot find room in an imagination or a heart made callous by selfish and interested indifference. 'Tis with regret rather than resentment that I perceive this sort of turn so prevalent among the young people of my acquaintance, or those with whom I am connected. I have now, alas! no child of my own in whom I can

can either lament ſuch a failing, or be proud of the want of it.

I think myſelf happy, Sir, that, even at my advanced period of life, I am ſtill ſuſceptible of ſuch impreſſions as thoſe which your 87th number imputes to rural contemplation. At this ſeaſon, above all others, methinks they are to be enjoyed. Now, in this fading time of the year, when the fluſh of vegetation, and the glow of maturity is paſt, when the fields put on a ſober, or rather a ſaddened appearance, I look on the well-known ſcenery around my country-dwelling, as I would on a friend fallen from the pride of proſperity to a more humble and a more intereſting ſituation. The withering graſs that whiſtles on the unſheltered bank; the fallen leaves ſtrewed over the woodland path; the ſilence of the almoſt naked copſe, which not long ago rung with the muſic of the birds; the flocking of their little tribes that ſeem mute with the dread of ills to come; the querulous call of the partridge in the bare brown field, and the ſoft low ſong of the red-breaſt from the houſehold ſhed; this penſive landſcape, with theſe plaintive accompaniments, dimmed by a grey October ſky, which we look on with the thoughts of its ſhortened and ſtill ſhortening light; all this preſſes on my boſom a certain ſtill and gentle melancholy, which I would not

part with for all the pleaſure that mirth could give, for all the luxury that wealth could buy.

You ſay truly, in one of your late Papers, that poetry is almoſt extinguiſhed among us: it is one of my old-faſhioned propenſities, to be fond of poetry, to be delighted with its deſcriptions, to be affected by its ſentiments. I find in genuine poetry a ſort of opening to the feelings of my mind, to which my own expreſſion could not give vent; I ſee in its deſcriptions a picture more lively and better compoſed than my own leſs diſtinct and leſs vivid ideas of the objects around me could furniſh. It is with ſuch impreſſions that I read the following lines of Thomſon's Autumn, introductive of the ſolemn and beautiful apoſtrophe to philoſophic melancholy.

" But ſee the fading many-colour'd woods,
" Shade deepening over ſhade, the country round
" Imbrown; a crowded umbrage, duſk and dun,
" Of every hue, from wan-declining green
" To ſooty dark. Theſe now the loneſome
" Muſe,
" Low-whiſpering, lead into their leaf-ſtrown
" walks,
" And give the ſeaſon in its lateſt view.
" Meantime, light-ſhadowing all, a ſober calm
" Fleeces unbounded ether; whoſe leaſt wave
" Stands tremulous, uncertain where to turn
" The gentle current; while illumin'd wide
" The

" The dewy ſkirted clouds imbibe the ſun,
" And thro' their lucid veil his ſoften'd force
" Shed o'er the peaceful world. Then is the
" time,
" For thoſe whom wiſdom and whom Nature
" charm,
" To ſteal themſelves from the degenerate
" crowd,
" And ſoar above this little ſcene of things;
" To tread low-thoughted Vice beneath their
" feet,
" To ſoothe the throbbing paſſions into peace,
" And wooe lone Quiet in her ſilent walks."

About this time three years, Sir, I had the misfortune to loſe a daughter, the laſt ſurvivor of my family, whom her mother, dying at her birth, left a legacy to my tenderneſs, who cloſed a life of the moſt exemplary goodneſs, of the moſt tender filial duty, of the warmeſt benevolence, of the moſt exalted piety, by a very gradual, but not unperceived decay. When I think on the returning ſeaſon of this calamity, when I ſee the laſt fading flowers of autumn, which my *Harriet* uſed to gather with a kind of ſympathetic ſadneſs, and hear the ſmall chirping note of the flocking linnets, which ſhe uſed to make me obſerve as the elegy of the year! when I have drawn her picture in the midſt of this

rural ſcenery, and then reflect on her many virtues and accompliſhments, on her early and unceaſing attentions to myſelf, her gentle and winning manners to every one around her; when I remember her reſignation during the progreſs of her diſorder, her unſhaken and ſublime piety in its lateſt ſtages; when theſe recollections fill my mind, in conjunction with the drooping images of the ſeaſon, and the ſenſe of my own waning period of life; I feel a mixture of ſadneſs and of compoſure, of humility and of elevation of ſpirit, which I think, Sir, a man would ill exchange for any degree of unfeeling prudence, or of worldly wiſdom and indifference.

The attachment to rural objects is like that family-affection which a warm and uncorrupted mind preſerves for its relations and early acquaintance. In a town, the lively partiality and predilection for theſe relations and friends, is weakened or loſt in the general intercourſe of the multitude around us. In a town, external objects are ſo common, ſo unappropriated to ourſelves, and are ſo liable to change and to decay, that we cannot feel any cloſe or permanent connection with them. In the country, we remember them unchanged for a long ſpace of time, and for that ſpace known and frequented by ſcarce any but ourſelves. "Methinks I "ſhould hate" (ſays a young Lady, the child of

of fiction, yet drawn with many features like that excellent girl I lost), "methinks I should "hate to have been born in a town. When I "say my native brook, or my native hill, I talk "of friends, of whom the remembrance warms "my heart." When the memory of persons we dearly loved is connected with the view of those objects, they have then a double link to the soul. It were tender enough for me to view some ancient trees that form my common evening-walk, did I only remember what I was when I first sported under their shade, and what I am when I rest under it now; but it is doubly tender, when I think of those with whom I have walked there; of her whom but a few summers ago I saw beneath those beeches, smiling in health, and beauty, and happiness, her present days lighted up with innocence and mirth, and her future drawn in the flattering colours of fancy and of hope.

But I know not why I should trouble you with this recital of the situation and feelings of an individual, or indeed why I should have written to you at all, except that I catched a sort of congenial spirit from your 87th number, and was led by the letter of Urbanus, to compare your description of a personage in former times, with those whose sentiments I sometimes hear in the present days. I am not sure that these have

gained in point of ſubſtance, what they have loſt in point of imagination. Power, and wealth, and luxury, are relative terms; and if addreſs, and prudence, and policy, can only acquire us our ſhare, we ſhall not account ourſelves more powerful, more rich, or more luxurious, than when in the little we poſſeſſed we were ſtill equal to thoſe around us. But if we have narrowed the ſources of internal comfort and internal enjoyment, if we have debaſed the powers or corrupted the purity of the mind, if we have blunted the ſympathy or contracted the affections of the heart, we have loſt ſome of that treaſure which was abſolutely our own, and derived not its value from comparative eſtimation. Above all, if we have allowed the prudence or the intereſts of this world, to ſhut out from our ſouls the view or the hopes of a better, we have quenched that light which would have cheered the darkneſs of affliction, and the evening of old age, which at this moment, Mr. Lounger (for, like an old man, I muſt come back to myſelf), I feel reſtoring me my virtuous friends, my loved relations, my deareſt child!

I am, &c.

ADRASTUS.

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